

The HOLY GRAIL of communication effectiveness.

*“Half the money I spend on advertising is wasted,
the trouble is I don't know which half.”*



This famous statement no longer need be the case. Indeed, a “communication coach” has recently developed, in partnership with a specialist of international B2B market research, a new, scientific methodology to help companies to measure, manage and maximise the return on their communication investments. Called “Return on Integrated Communication” (R.I.C.), it allows to guide in a precise and integrated manner a company’s communication efforts on the long term, whilst enabling to anticipate the impact and effectiveness of communication actions even before their launch. Particularly suited to business to business contexts, this original method has already been successfully applied to a number of multinational companies and international industry federations.

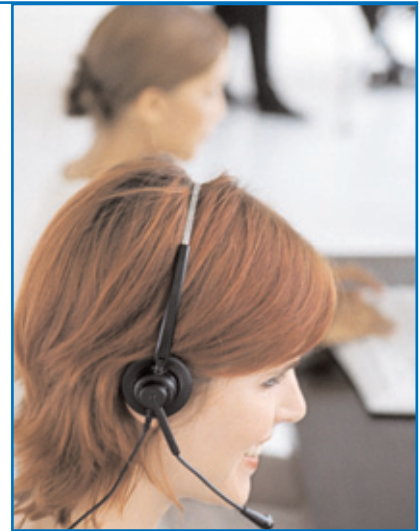
Brief review of the key steps of this independent coaching process ...

Step 1 : Quantification of the decision-making process

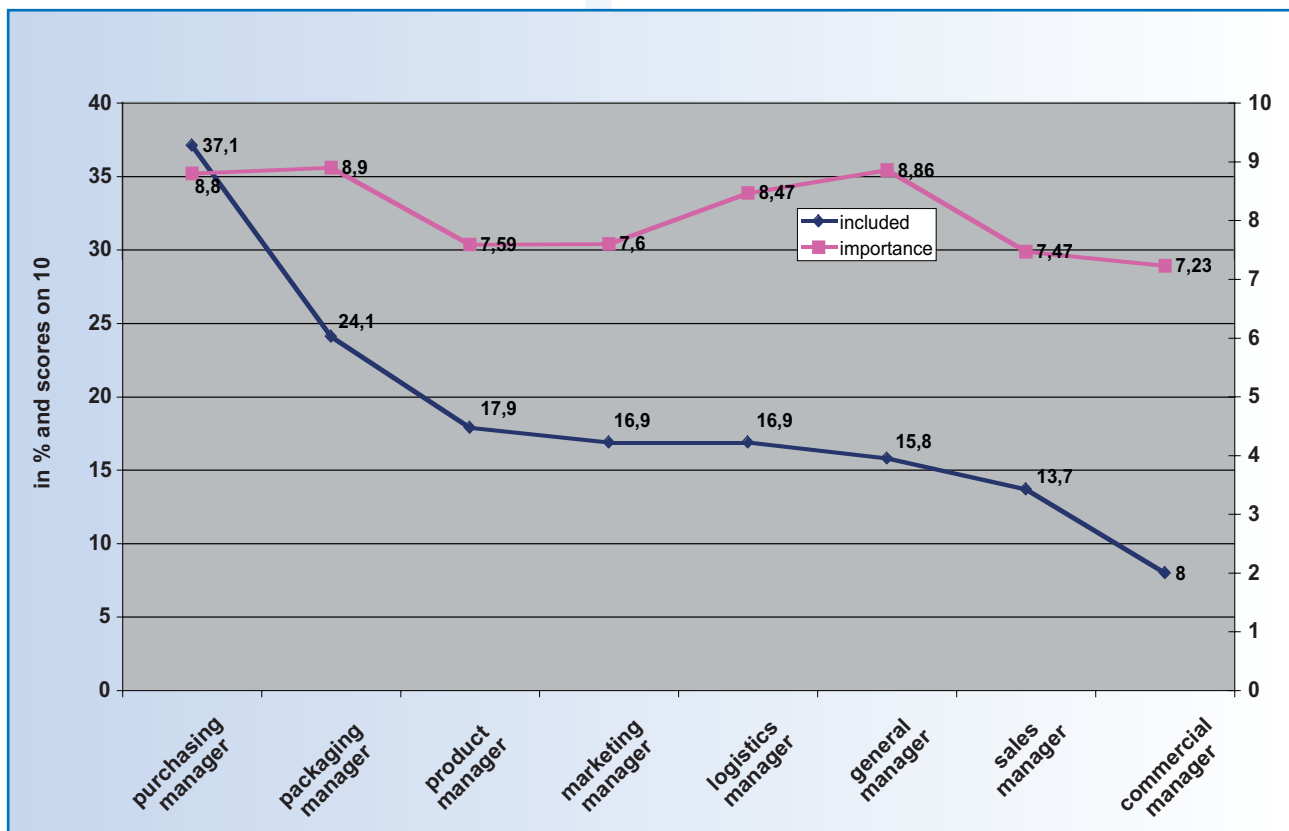
In a first stage, a quantitative survey will help reveal, for a particular market segment, the level of involvement and the level of importance of every person involved in the decision-making process of purchase or loyalty towards a company, its products or its services. In the synthesis below, one can see that in market sector x, the purchasing manager is involved in the decision-making process in 37,1% of the cases, with an average importance of 8,8 on a scale of 1 to 10.

The general manager is, for his part, involved in the decision-making process in 15,8% of the cases, but when he is involved, his importance is maximal (8,86/10).

Besides a global vision of the decision-making process, which allows the company to take the adequate decisions to appropriately target its communication actions, the RIC process helps constitute a highly qualified database containing, for all target companies, all individual data necessary for a precise targeting of communication actions.



process



Graph 1 - Ranking of decision-makers.

Step 2 :

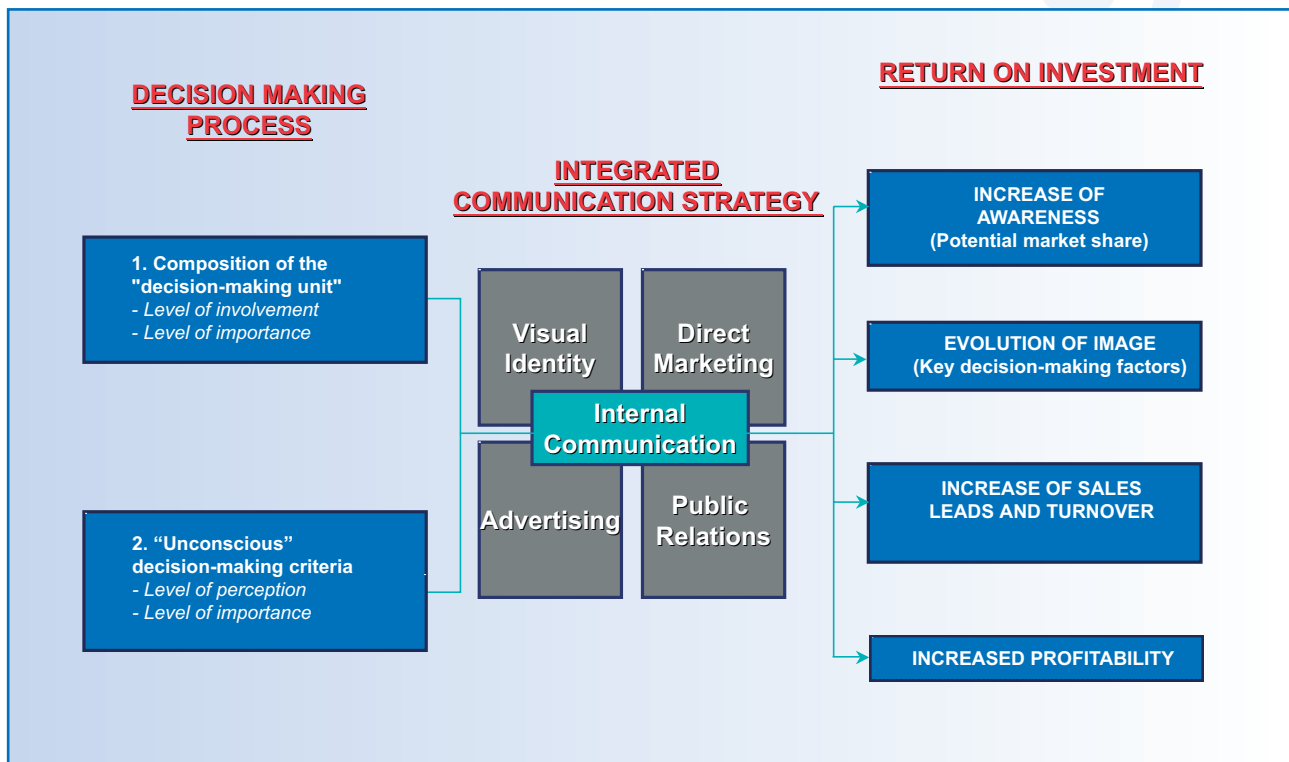
The ranking of "unconscious" decision-making factors : basis of an integrated strategy

Then, based on a representative sample of decision-makers, the criteria used – mostly unconsciously – to opt for or to remain with a company and its products in that particular market segment, are ranked per order of importance. The perception of the company and its competitors are positioned according to these factors. This results in a RIC scale revealing those parameters which will produce highest return on investment for the implementation of all communication actions. Correctly interpreted, it will serve as the basis for the development of the most appropriate communication strategy.

It will then allow to guide – on a day to day basis – all of the company's communication tools in an integrated way : visual identity, direct marketing, advertising, public relations and, last but not least, internal communication.



strategy



Graph 2 - A RIC basis for an integrated marketing communication strategy.

Step 3 : A credible guide for internal communication

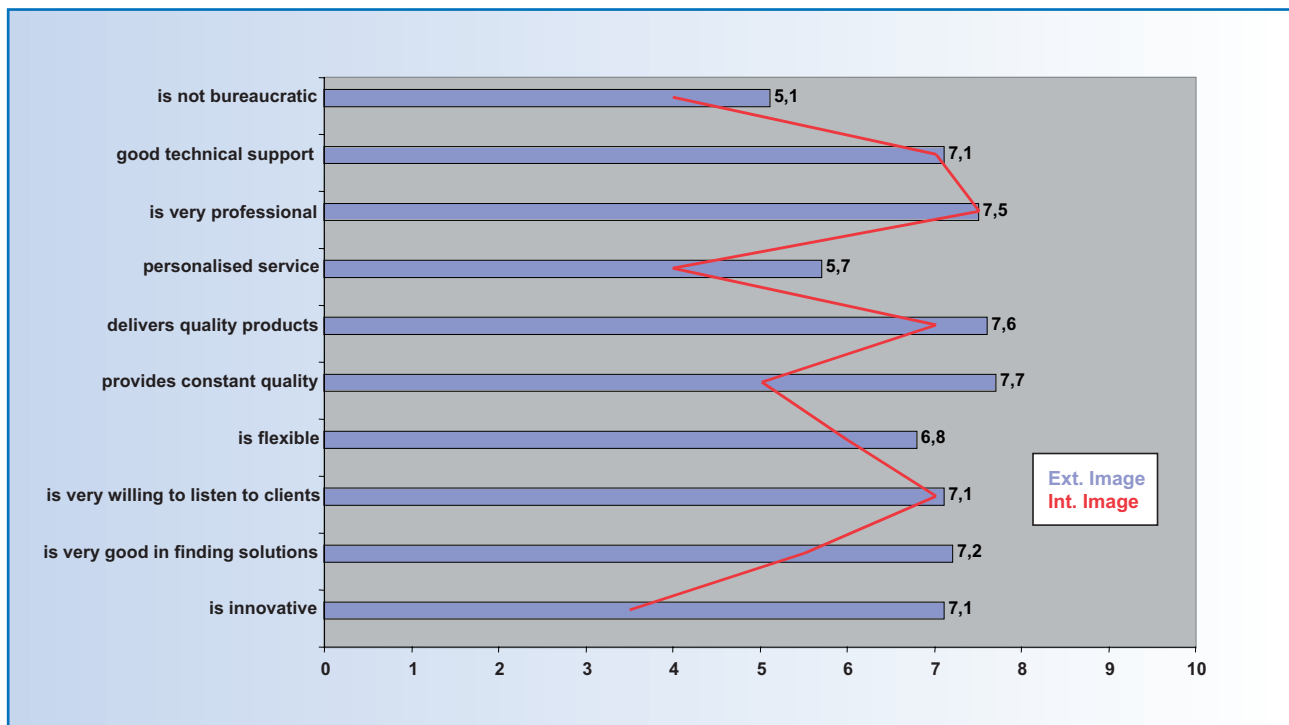
Often poorly valued amongst the various management disciplines, internal communication proves to be as important as external communication, particularly in B2B. Indeed, a lack of performance in this area can jeopardize the efforts put on external actions.

Here also, the RIC process constitutes an ideal tool to increase the awareness of internal staff about their company's market challenges. The internal communication can thus acquire a new credibility, based on a precise and representative image of the perceptions and expectations of the relevant market actors. A comparison between the internal and the external perceptions allows the internal efforts to be guided, through seminars or training sessions, newsletters ..etc.

In the graph below, it can be seen that the company should focus its internal communication on a reduction of bureaucracy, a more personalised service, the production of a constant quality and innovation.



internal communication



Graph 3 - The unconscious decision-making criteria.

Step 4 : A scientific evaluation of different communication concepts

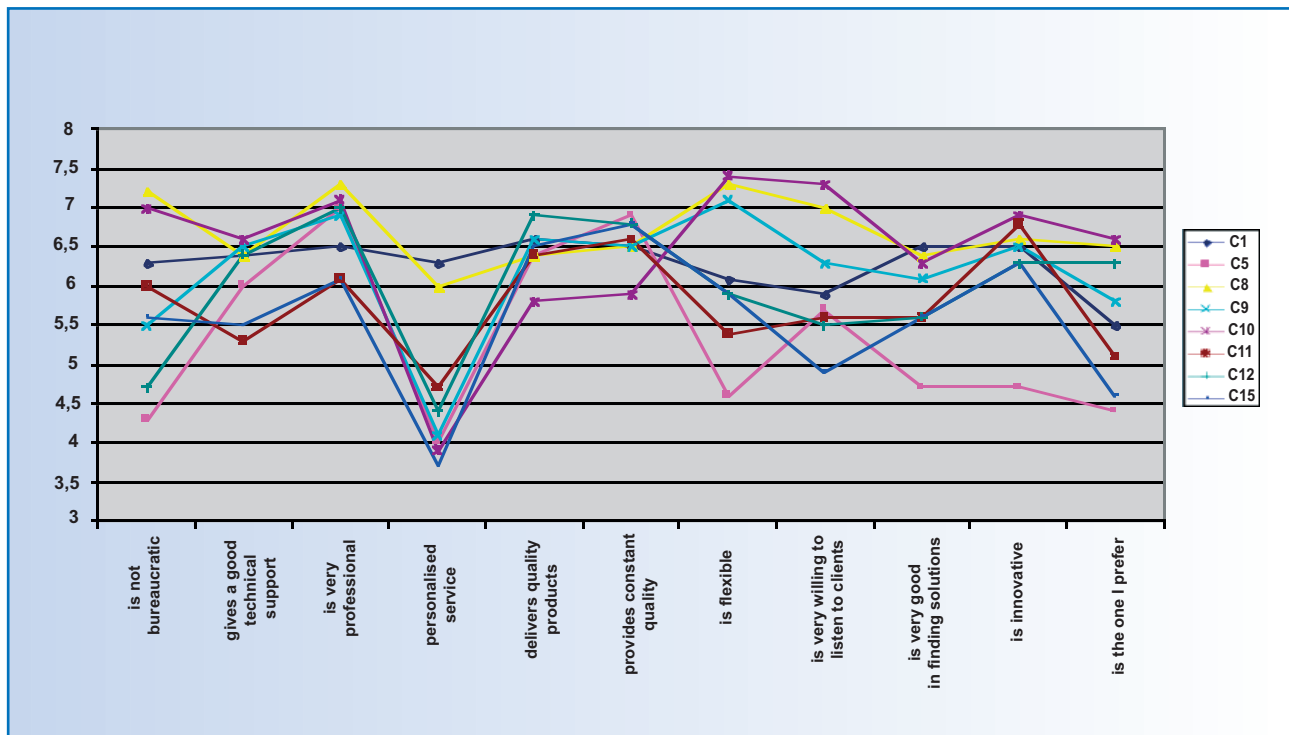
Once the relative importance of the unconscious decision-making factors have been determined on a representative scale, the company can rely on a tool which allows them to give detailed briefs to communication agencies on the key factors they should take into account to achieve adequate and maximal impact. Once the concepts are available, it is then possible to pre-test, simply and at low cost, any communication tool before its implementation, amongst an indicative sample of decision-makers : a new visual identity, a newsletter, a new corporate brochure, a new advertising or direct marketing campaign. And this methodology does not only allow the most effective concept to be chosen, but also to retain amongst concepts which were not chosen certain elements which had nevertheless obtained an interesting impact on certain criteria, in order to include them into the chosen concept.

In the example below, creative concept 8 was chosen due to its superior global impact on the majority of the decision-making criteria.

Yet certain elements from concepts 9 and 10 could also be incorporated in the final concept. Experience shows that the use of this method avoids lengthy discussions regarding the choice between communication concepts, be it with creative agencies, which recognize the scientific foundation of such a feed-back from the market actors, or be it internally.



scientific



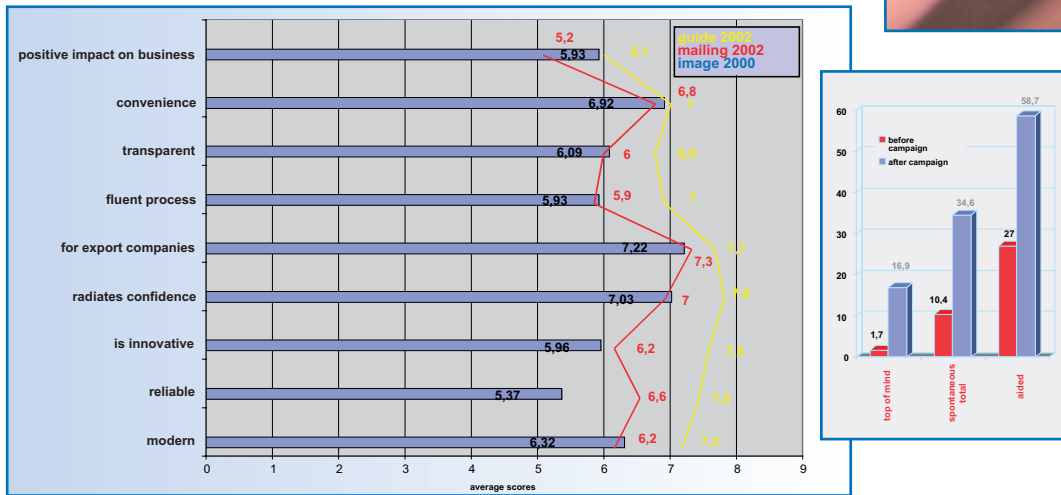
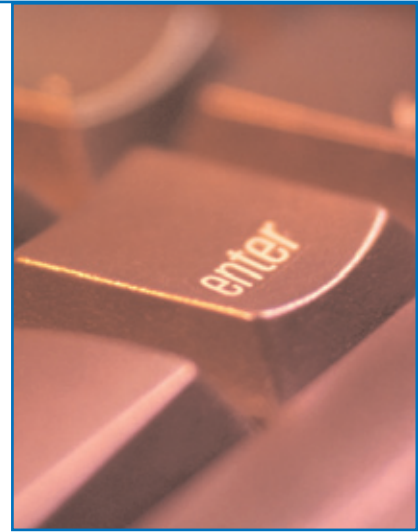
Graph 4 - Scientific evaluation of creative concepts.

Step 5 :

A precise demonstration of communication effectiveness

In guiding the communication tools thanks to a focus on the key decision-making parameters, the effectiveness of the communication actions and programmes is maximised. By acting on the right decision-making factors, one triggers maximum interest amongst the targeted decision-makers. And it becomes possible to measure the precise – and often important – impact of communication actions and programmes on the key parameters.

The graphs below show the impact of a campaign implemented following the RIC method: important increase of the “top of mind” awareness, of the spontaneous awareness, which constitutes the potential market share, and of the aided awareness. One can also see the improvement in the key image parameters, as well as the strong increase of the sales leads.

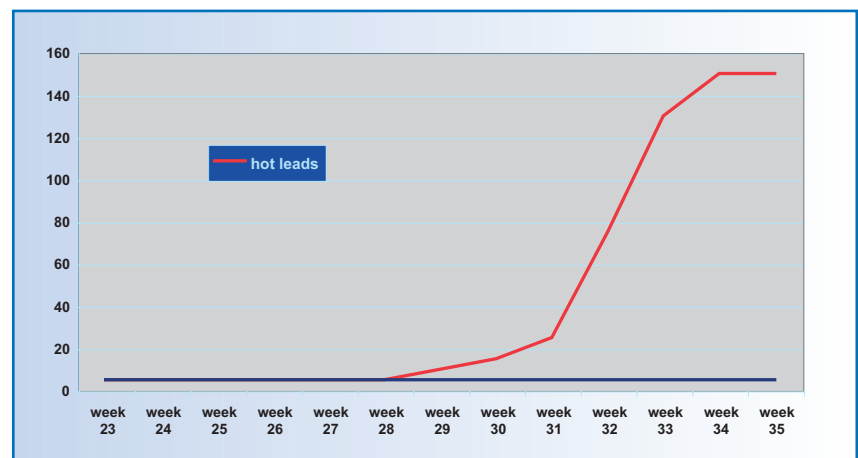


Graph 5 - Maximisation of communication effectiveness.

effectiveness

Thus, with the RIC process it is possible to visualize in a very precise manner all elements – including intermediary steps – which ensure that the communication actions and programmes contribute to the company's objectives.

Such a scientific demonstration - both for the internal staff and the company's management – helps build the necessary credibility to gain positive commitment for future communication actions and programmes.



Graph 6 - Strong increase of the Sales Leads.

International communication: Coaching the Global & Local

Also in international contexts, the RIC methodology brings a clear and representative solution to the traditional issue of global / local. It allows to avoid the classical "Not invented here" syndrome, which is the resistance that often develops in national or local business units against central management decisions.

The RIC process, in providing a precise and reliable feed-back from relevant market actors, convinces the national or local unit managers about the most appropriate global/local split.



	Belgium	France	Italy	Spain	Germany	Netherlands	Sweden
Customer lifetime value	1	3	4	5	2	1	6
Personalized service	4	1	6	1	1		1
Integration of distribution channels	8		10	4		6	
Customer segmentation	3	9				2	
Sales force support		4		3	9		3
Quality of the marketing module				2	4		9
Flexibility		5				5	2
Quality of the service module			3	7	8	4	
Reason for decrease of sales	5			10		10	
Management of marketing campaigns	10						
Qualitative customer information	2						
Quantitative customer information	6						
Interdepartmental workflow	7		8				
Reliability	9				7		
Generates sales leads					10	3	
Understand why one loses clients						7	5
Innovation						8	
Positive impact on turnover		10		6		9	
Control of sales force		2	2		3		
Freedom of local business units					5		10
Ergonomic aspect		8			6		
Use of the most advanced technology		7		8			4
Anticipation of customer needs		6	7				
Step by step implementation			1				
Understanding of customer needs			5	9			
Sales forecast			9				

Graph 7 : A differentiating scale per country.

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